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ABSTRACT

In 1973, the School of Education at the University of South Dakota reorganized from a departmental structure to a team approach. Programs became competency based, field based, and modular in nature. The program sequence begins with the American Education course in the sophomore year. This course was designed for students to familiarize themselves with the services and functions of the school of education, to assess their personal values with respect to a career in education, and to better make decisions with respect to a career in education. A variety of presenters meet with the classes to provide background in the services of the school of education, field based centers, competency based education, philosophy of education, professional organizations, career options, and teacher placement. Each student enrolled in the course must schedule three individual values clarification sessions and make 16 observations during the year in the K-12 schools in the local community. Evaluation is utilized throughout the course. Each student is required to submit a final position paper on why or why not a teaching career will be pursued. (Author/JMF)

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# A FIRST COURSE IN A COMPETENCY BASED/FIELD BASED TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM

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A presentation to the 1976 ATE Annual Conference

by

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In 1973, the School of Education at The University of South Dakota reorganized from a departmental structure to a cross-disciplinary team organization. A major goal was to provide prospective teacher candidates with a broad set of practical classroom experiences over a longer time span than was practical with previous programs. The undergraduate program sequence was to begin with the Educational Foundations (EDFN) course "American Education" in the sophomore year, followed by the Educational Psychology and Guidance course during the junior year and a full semester of student teaching in the senior year. Classroom observations were planned for the sophomore course followed by paraprofessional classroom work during the junior year.

A revision of the EDFN course by an ad hoc committee was implemented to identify the goals and objectives for the course. Recommendations were that a consortium of professors from the School of Education as well as personnel outside of the University would be invited to make presentations at each class meeting.

A three-member task force was charged to develop a course outline of objectives and activities based upon the goals and objectives established by the ad hoc committee. One member of the task force was the professor responsible for teaching the course.

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The EDFN course was designed with three main goals of assisting students in: (1) becoming familiar with the services and functions of the School of Education, (2) assessing their personal values in respect to a career in education and (3) making rational decisions in respect to a

career in education. Students were required to enroll for two consecutive semesters. The class was designed to meet for one hour per week with one semester hour of credit earned each semester. Grading was based upon a credit/failure basis. To receive credit the students were required to:

1. accomplish all designated in-class and out-of-class objectives. (Make-up modules were provided for those unable to attend class presentations.)

2. make 30 observations of classes selected from kindergarten through grade twelve; where as much as possible, equalizing the observations among the elementary, middle school and high school divisions.

3. attend three out-of-class values clarification counseling sessions including a final interview.

4. complete a Final Statement composed of "reasons for selecting a career in teaching and expected accomplishments".

Two paperback-textbooks of readings in current educational problems were required. Periodic reading assignments were scheduled in the course outline. An outline of objectives contained in the course outline given to the students at the beginning of each semester can be found in Appendix 1.

Primarily, the American Education course was open to sophomore students indicating an interest in a career in education. However, some juniors and seniors were permitted to register.

The revised EDFN course was implemented during the 1974-75 school year. Classes were divided into six sections with an average enrollment of forty students. The Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory (MTAI) was administered at the beginning and the end of the year to acquire pre- and post-course data of attitudes toward teaching. Immediate feedback information following class presentations was periodically obtained from student evaluation forms.

A variety of presenters met with the classes to provide background in the services of the School of Education, field-based centers, competency-based education, philosophy of education, professional organizations, career

options and teacher placement. Presenters were asked specifically to avoid lecturing and to utilize activity-centered approaches.

The required values clarification sessions were scheduled during the second and third class meetings of the semester. The three sessions were conducted individually by doctoral candidates participating in the counseling practicum.

Scheduling of the thirty K-12 classroom observations was a monumental task. The assistance and cooperation of the "field-center coordinator", whose position is a joint appointment by the University and the local school system, was of considerable value in arranging for classroom observations. Three special forms were developed to assist the students in observing specific classroom characteristics which coincided with the particular emphases being discussed in the EDFN class. The first set of observations concentrated on the cognitive development of the observed students; the second set of observations concentrated on the approaches used by teachers to accommodate the various stages of cognitive development; the third concentrated on the overall differences between the high school, middle school and elementary school students and facilities.

A special section was established during the spring semester to accommodate students beyond the sophomore year who had enrolled in the former program which required only one hour of credit in EDFN. The key concepts from the full-year program were developed in the special spring semester section. Only twelve classroom observations were required. Three counseling sessions were also required of this group. The Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory was administered to the special section at the beginning and the end of the spring semester to acquire pre- and post-course data of attitude toward teaching.

Several problems developed, most of which were connected with the classroom observations. The aid of the field-center coordinator made the difficult task of scheduling much easier than anticipated. However, unforeseen difficulties ensued. One immediate problem was that the observation forms to aid the students in monitoring classes, although viewed by the University task force as innocuous, were viewed by the public school principals as threatening to the teachers observed. The forms were modified to be acceptable. Students sometimes had difficulty in finding the classrooms which they had signed up to observe. Classes sometimes changed in scheduling and students complained there was no class to observe during the scheduled time. The system of scheduling was improved considerably during the spring semester--again due to the cooperation of the field-center coordinator. Students complained considerably that too many observations were required and found them difficult to accomplish without interference with their University classes. The number of observations was reduced from the original thirty to sixteen per year. Students also complained that the presentations tended to be lecture-oriented rather than activity-oriented, lacking interpersonal relationships. In-course correction was difficult to achieve since the presenters usually were involved in only one presentation. Students also strongly felt that two semesters of one meeting per week made the course drag out too long and would have preferred a single semester of two meetings per week. The course was, in fact, changed to a one semester course the following year.

## EVALUATION AND IMPLICATIONS

Evaluation was utilized throughout the course. Forms for evaluation of the presentations were periodically filled out by the students at the end of the classes. A final evaluation of the course was filled out by each student

responding to an approved School of Education instrument. As a final requirement, each student submitted a final position paper on why a teaching career would or would not be pursued. The position papers become part of the students' files maintained in the Career Development Center.

Since the American Education course EDFN is a first course for students investigating a career in education, it was of interest to obtain some indicators of the students' attitude toward education prior to and at the end of the course. All students enrolled in American Education were required to respond to the MTAI, both at the beginning and at the end of the course. The special section (one semester) completed the MTAI at the beginning and the end of the spring semester.

The manual for the MTAI specified that the Inventory reflects to a certain degree the educational philosophy of the authors. The basic assumption is that persons scoring high on the instrument should be able to keep teacher-student relations on a harmonious basis. A high score should reflect a philosophy of teaching conducive to an open and permissive atmosphere in the classroom with the teachers and pupils both enjoying their work and showing mutual affection and sympathetic understanding. The members of the ad hoc committee which formalized plans for the course felt the response to the MTAI would serve as one indicator of change brought about by the EDFN course.

The possible range of scores on the MTAI is from plus 150 to minus 150. Each response in agreement with specific attitude statements was scored plus one and each response in disagreement with specific attitude statements was scored minus one.

Pre- and post-scores were paired for each student. The scores of students who dropped the course were not considered in the analysis. The

mean was computed for both pre- and post-scores along with the two-tailed t-test for significance. The means of pre- and post-scores were also computed on the basis of grade level. Since the special section contained only a few students in some grade levels (e.g., seniors, N=1), it was combined with the two-semester groups for consideration of grade level.

Inspection of Table 1 shows that the mean of the pre- and post-scores was increased significantly at the 0.001 level for students enrolled for two consecutive semesters in EDFN. A significant increase in the means of pre- and post-scores was observed at the 0.100 level for students enrolled in EDFN for a single semester. It should be noted that the one-semester group was exposed to selected major concepts dealt with throughout the full-year course and not simply a single semester of the latter. It appears that two semesters of the course brought about a greater positive change in attitudes toward teaching than did the single semester. However, one should be cautioned that a relatively low N existed for the special section.

TABLE 1

Comparison by Duration of Class

| Duration | Test | N | Mean | M | t | df | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| two semesters | Pre | 171 | 39.1 | +11.4 | 6.54 | 170 | 0.000 |
| | Post | | 50.5 | | | | |
| one semester | Pre | 24 | 29.9 | + 8.9 | 1.72 | 23 | 0.098 |
| | Post | | 38.8 | | | | |

An analysis of the scores for all students participating in the EDFN classes (Table 2) indicates the greatest gain in the means of scores for

the freshmen and seniors. Graduate students showed the lowest gain in average scores. A similar pattern is reflected in the normative data provided by the MTAI.

TABLE 2

Comparison by Grade Level (all Sections Combined)

| Level | Test | N | Mean | M | t | df | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Freshman | Pre | 6 | 32.2 | +14.7 | 4.95 | 5 | 0.004 |
| | Post | | 46.8 | | | | |
| Sophomore | Pre | 112 | 37.1 | +10.5 | 4.86 | 111 | 0.000 |
| | Post | | 47.6 | | | | |
| Junior | Pre | 48 | 44.3 | +12.0 | 3.65 | 47 | 0.001 |
| | Post | | 56.3 | | | | |
| Senior | Pre | 21 | 32.5 | +14.3 | 2.44 | 20 | 0.024 |
| | Post | | 46.8 | | | | |
| Graduate | Pre | 8 | 32.5 | + 1.0 | 0.13 | 7 | 0.901 |
| | Post | | 33.1 | | | | |

SUMMARY

The attitude toward teaching as measured by the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory:

1. appears to be significantly influenced in the positive direction by the American Education course, EDFN.
2. appears to be more positively influenced by two semesters of the EDFN course than a single semester which consisted in the main part of selected major concepts dealt with in the two-semester course.

3. appears to be significantly higher for undergraduate students than graduate students as indicated by average gain scores on the MTAI.

Several variables in the course itself influenced responses to the MTAI. Students were required to participate in a minimum of three individual counseling sessions. There were both favorable and unfavorable reactions to the counseling sessions. The observations in the schools certainly were factors of influence. There were a few students who, following classroom observations, stated that teaching was not for them. Some students felt the observations were trivial and would have preferred paraprofessional experiences. Others stated they viewed the observations as invaluable experiences. The topics and the deliveries of the presenters in the EDFN class were also factors. The course required certain demands upon the students' time outside of the classroom (i.e., classroom observations, counseling sessions) which seemed to create, in some cases, a negative attitude which might be reflected in the scores on the MTAI.

The EDFN course, American Education, was designed as a developmental course on the premise that mid-course and end-of-course changes would be expected. Mid-course changes were made, as were changes for the ensuing year. Perhaps the designers could be faulted for not depending more heavily upon student input. However, student input is sometimes solicited from students about to take a course, with the question posed, "What would you expect to gain from the course?" It would seem wiser from this writer's point of view to solicit rather the input of those who have recently completed the student teaching program and those who have recently completed their first year of teaching.

Appendix 1

EDFN AMERICAN EDUCATION

Objectives

Meeting No.

1. Orientation
   To develop an awareness of the content of the course.
   To stimulate interest in EDFN and the field of education.

2. Orientation
   To explain objectives and requirements of the course.
   To determine student attitudes toward the teaching profession.

3. To look at self in relation to the field of education.
   To explain objectives and requirements of the course.

4. To be able to identify the principle elements of team structure, the field-center concept, competency-based teacher preparation, modular instruction.

5. To meet the Dean of the School of Education.
   To explain the rationale for the reorganization of the School of Education.
   To identify at least four major challenges in education.
   To identify at least four future trends in education.

6. To familiarize students with services of Research and Service team.

7. To become acquainted with the services of the Career Development Center.

8. To identify areas in the teaching field as to high or low mobility of employment.
   To identify areas of employment related to education (presentation by Career Development Center.)

9. Learning Resource Lab Orientation
   To become acquainted with the services and facilities of the Learning Resource Laboratory.

10. Social-Cultural Roots of American Education
    To be able to relate the educational philosophy of the early colonists in respect to minority groups, especially the American Indians, to the present educational structure.

11. Cognitive Development
    To be able to describe characteristics of cognitive development in K-12 students.

12. Cognitive Development
To describe the different levels of cognitive development described by Piaget and others.

13. Cognitive Development
To observe an actual student-teacher interaction in cognitive development processes.
To participate in actual cognitive development experiences.

14. Segregation/Desegregation
To investigate educational injustices and negatives among minority groups in general.

15. Native Americans and Education
To investigate educational injustices and inequalities among Native Americans.
To involve students in selecting alternative solutions to specific problems in the education of Native Americans.

16. Evaluation
To acquire student evaluation of the course for consideration in revision.

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17. Open Education
To present the "open classroom" as an alternative to the self-contained classroom concept.

18. Individualized Instruction
To define individualized instruction.

19. Purposes of Education
To explore the purposes and goals of school K-12.

20. Teaching
To define and identify specific teaching skills.

21. Observations
To discuss teacher characteristics observed in classroom visits and relate to cognitive developmental patterns of students.

22. Progress in Professionalism
Identification of professionalism and teacher ethics.

23. Educational Organizations
American Federation of Teachers (AFT) presentation.

24. Educational Organization
South Dakota Education Association (SDEA) presentation.

25. Certification and Placement
To introduce students to the placement services at USD.
To be able to identify the basic tenants of certification and placement procedures.

26. Interview Process - Hiring Procedures
To involve students in an interview/hiring process.

27. Values Clarification Seminar
To explore values in relation to incidents in education and share perceptions of solutions to educational problems.

28. Guest Educators
To participate with educators in the field in a presentation about their views of education as a career choice.
Panel discussion by people presently in the field of education, retirees, and student teachers.

29. Team Structure
To participate in presentations by Teams I, II, and III.
To gain knowledge for use later in team selection.

30. Team Structure
To participate in presentations by Teams IV, V, and VI.
To gain knowledge for use later in team selection.

31. Evaluation
Due: A position statement as to why you want to enter the teaching profession, why you want to become a member of a specific team and what you hope to accomplish during your professional experiences in the School of Education and later in the field of education.

32. Evaluation
Student evaluations of the course.